

AMENDMENT TO THE COMMITTEE PRINT OF H.R.**2192****OFFERED BY MR. MICHAUD OF MAINE**

In lieu of the matter proposed to be inserted after the enacting clause by the Committee Print, insert the following:

1 **SECTION 1. ESTABLISHMENT OF OFFICE OF THE OMBUDS-**
2 **MAN IN VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRA-**
3 **TION.**

4 (a) OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN.—

5 (1) ESTABLISHMENT.—Subchapter I of chapter
6 73 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by
7 adding at the end the following new section:

8 **“§ 7309. Office of the Ombudsman.**

9 “(a) OFFICE; DIRECTORS.—There is established in
10 the Veterans Health Administration an Office of the Om-
11 budsman (in this section referred to as the Office). The
12 Office shall be headed by a Director appointed by the Sec-
13 retary. The Director shall report directly to the Secretary.

14 “(b) DUTIES OF OFFICE.—The Office shall—

15 “(1) be responsible for ensuring—

16 “(A) all matters referred to the Office are
17 handled in a confidential manner; and

1 “(B) any action taken by the Administra-
2 tion with respect to such a matter does not neg-
3 atively affect the ability of any veteran to re-
4 ceive health care or benefits under a law admin-
5 istered by the Secretary; and

6 “(2) serve as a last resort for complaints and
7 issues that cannot be resolved at a local or regional
8 level in the Administration.

9 “(c) DUTIES OF DIRECTOR.—The Director shall—

10 “(1) be responsible for overseeing the efforts of
11 patient advocates in the Administration;

12 “(2) develop and make available to local offices
13 of the Administration tools for monitoring the work
14 of such patient advocates and standards to evaluate
15 the work of such patient advocates;

16 “(3) determine trends, in terms of numbers,
17 topics, and facility locations, in patient issues and
18 complaints;

19 “(4) participate in such national quality con-
20 ferences of the Administration as the Under Sec-
21 retary for Health may designate;

22 “(5) help coordinate assistance for veterans who
23 need assistance from the Administration in more
24 than one region of the Administration; and

1 “(6) maintain a public website with links to
2 contact information for each patient advocate at
3 each medical center of the Department.

4 “(d) REGIONAL ADMINISTRATORS.—The Director
5 shall appoint three regional administrators to support fa-
6 cilities of the Administration and veterans integrated serv-
7 ice networks in their patient advocacy work, to identify
8 best practices for patient advocacy work and inform such
9 facilities and networks of such best practices, and to re-
10 ceive and refer to the board established under subsection
11 (e) appeals from veterans in their respective regions who
12 are not satisfied with the efforts of their local medical cen-
13 ter of the Department and veteran integrated service net-
14 work.

15 “(e) BOARD.—The Director shall establish a board
16 composed of the Director and the three regional adminis-
17 trators appointed under subsection (d) to hear appeals re-
18 ferred to the board by a regional administrator under sub-
19 section (d) and issue a letter explaining the board’s deci-
20 sion regarding such appeal and outlining possible steps for
21 resolving issues raised in such appeal.

22 “(f) LIMITATION ON STATUTORY CONSTRUCTION.—
23 Nothing in this section shall be construed as affecting the
24 authority and responsibility of coordinators of patient ad-
25 vocates for severely injured veterans of Operation of En-

1 during Freedom and severely injured veterans of Oper-
2 ation Iraqi Freedom.”.

3 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-
4 tions at the beginning of such chapter is amended
5 by inserting after the item relating to section 7308
6 the following new item:

“7309. Office of the Ombudsman.”.

7 (b) DEADLINE FOR DESIGNATION OF OMBUDS-
8 MAN.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the en-
9 actment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs
10 shall designate an individual to serve as the Ombudsman
11 of the Veterans Health Administration under section 7309
12 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection
13 (a).

